

Joyce & Jane: Safe with Me by GettingThere

Series: [Joyce & Jane \[1\]](#)

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When Joyce and Hopper got married, he and Jane moved into the Byers home. It hadn't taken long for Jane to start calling Joyce her mom, and recently she'd started a phase where she wanted to spend every minute with Joyce. Whether it was painting their nails, reading magazines, or just cuddling on the couch, Jane wanted to be with her mother. So it was a surprise to Joyce when one afternoon, she came home from work and her daughter wasn't there to meet her at the door.

"Kids! I'm home!"

No answer. She knew Jonathan had gone over to Nancy's after school that day, and that Will was probably in his room drawing and too focused to hear her. But where was Janey? The living room was empty, but when Joyce got to the kitchen, she found Jane on the floor holding a roll of paper towel next to a huge puddle of spilled milk.

"I'm sorry, Mommy! I'm sorry!" Jane unrolled the paper towel as fast as she could and spread it over the puddle, but it was too big to be fully absorbed. The empty jug lay next to her on the floor and Joyce remembered it had been about half full when she left for work that morning. Jane used all of the paper towel on her roll, but when it still wasn't enough to absorb the mess, she crouched down on a dry spot on the floor and wrapped her arms around her head. "I'm sorry, Mommy! I'm sorry!"

Joyce got down on her knees next to Jane. "Sweetheart, it's okay. Nobody's going to hurt you. You didn't do anything wrong. It's okay." Jane kept her arms wrapped around her head and rocked back and forth breathing heavily. More than anything, Joyce wanted to reach out and hug her daughter, but she knew she couldn't. Not when Jane was like this. "Honey, I'm going to clean up the milk and give you a chance to calm down. Then after everything's clean, I'm going to come back and sit next to you on the floor until you feel better. You're not in trouble, love. You didn't do anything wrong."

Joyce picked up the paper towel that was on the floor and threw it

into the kitchen garbage. Then she got out her mop, cleaned up the rest of the mess, and recycled the milk jug. As she cleaned, she could hear Jane's breathing even out. When she was all finished, Joyce got down on the floor next to her daughter and tried to comfort her again. By that time, Jane was lying on her side in fetal position with her arms still wrapped around her head. Her breathing was normal, but her eyes were shut tight.

"Sweetheart, it's me, Mom. Can you tell me where you are?"

Jane kept her eyes closed. "At home."

"And who lives with you at home?"

"You, Dad, Jonathan, and Will."

"And can you tell me how old you are?"

"Fourteen."

"And what's your full name?"

"Jane L. Byers-Hopper."

"Very good, sweetie. Now why are you keeping your arms over your head?"

"To protect it."

"From what, love?"

"Getting hit. Or kicked."

Joyce exhaled slowly. "Who are you afraid is going to hurt you?"

"I don't know."

"Is it me?"

"No."

"So why don't you try taking your arms away from your head? And maybe opening your eyes?" Jane did as she was told, but stayed lying

on the floor with her thighs pressed against her stomach. She looked up at her mother and started to cry.

“I’m sorry, Mommy. I didn’t mean to. It was an accident.”

“I know, honey. I know.” Joyce reached out to stroke her daughter’s hair and Jane leaned into the touch. “Everybody spills things sometimes, love. It’s normal. You didn’t do anything wrong, and I’m not mad. You’re safe, sweetie. You’re safe with me.”

Joyce continued running her fingers through her daughter’s hair, and Jane slowly relaxed her legs. When the girl finally sat up, Joyce opened her arms wide for a hug and Jane rushed into them, holding her mother tight. “I’m sorry, Mommy. I’m really sorry.”

Joyce hugged her daughter with one arm and rubbed slow circles into her back with her other hand. “Sweetheart, you don’t have to be sorry. It was just milk and there’s more at the store. I don’t care about the milk, love. I care about you. I want to make sure you feel safe, that you’re not afraid, and that you know I’m never, ever going to hurt you.”

“I know. But sometimes I remember the bad men.”

“I know you do, sweetie. But the bad men are never going to hurt you again. Because I’m your mother now, and nobody hurts my children.”

Jane pressed her face into the side of her mother’s neck and Joyce went back to stroking her daughter’s hair. “And I’m not the only one here to protect you. There’s your dad, and your brothers, and Mike, and all your friends. None of us are ever going to let anything happen to you.”

Jane held onto Joyce as tightly as she could. “I love you, Mommy.”

“I love you too, angel. So much.”